

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



[The Editor is not responsible for opinions expressed in this Department.]

DEAR EDITOR: To assume or to argue that men as a rule surpass in general adaptability and competency the women in the avocation of nursing is a position which the writer does not take, feeling, as he does, that such a statement would be radical and self-assertive, and one which has not or cannot be corroborated by observation and experience.

The motive which has prompted the writing of this article is not one of antagonism to the propriety of women nursing, but rather to set forth in as clear a light as possible some cases or instances where the skilled training of the hand and the brain of the man nurse is advantageously felt and realized. It is true, I verily believe, that the special fitness and qualifications of a woman over a man in the nursing of all ills and diseases to which the human family is heir are greatly superior, and especially is this true in surgical cases.

One principal reason why the woman nurse is held in preference over the man is because of the elements of sympathy and compassion which is a part of her human nature, and which does not naturally enter into and prove a controlling feature in the action of men in general.

The gentleness and tenderness of a woman shown in the handling of cases affected with nervous troubles, where the peevishness of the nature asserts itself in a remarkable degree, renders the service of a woman especially desirable with this class of patients.

In cases of paralysis, insanity, urinary troubles, and in most all instances where the patient is suffering dire physical extremity, which practically resolve themselves into sheer exhaustion or helplessness, I am firmly of the opinion that the man nurse can work to better advantage and obtain better general results in the outcome of the cases than the woman. I am quite sure the experience of nursing in hospital and home will sustain this statement.

The principal reasons, as I have observed them, which warrant this assertion are, first, the greater physical strength of the man nurse to combat and overcome the physical obstinacy in some cases, and in others the utter helplessness wrought as results of these diseases; second, because men are more generally affected with the above enumerated troubles, and as men they much prefer a nurse of their own sex for private reasons. To such cases men render to men better and more satisfactory service.

The question is frequently asked, Why are there not more good men nurses if they are naturally or can by a course of training be duly qualified to nurse the troubles of human kind? If the persons who make this inquiry would inform themselves of the fact that there are in the United States, so far as the writer knows, just two places where a man can receive training,—viz., Bellevue Hospital in New York City and Grace Hospital at Detroit, Mich.,—they would not or could not wonder at the fact of there being so comparatively few men who have acquired a marked degree of proficiency in this avocation of life. If there were at least

one such school in each of the large cities or commercial centres which dot our land, there would be infinitely more young men who would take up the work of properly fitting themselves for nursing, and thus relieve the women of a great many disagreeable cases which in all probability they would gladly and willingly surrender. There is no good reason why there should be an unfriendly rivalry or contention between men and women in the nursing line, because each can, if the proper spirit be shown, be friendly, agreeable, and helpful to the other. To exclude either from this grand, good field of labor would be a personal imposition, injustice, and injury to those who have aspirations in this direction.

As I said at the outset, women as a rule are better adapted to nursing in the broadest and highest sense of the term, but this does not by any means argue the men out of the question of entering this field of study and action.

The writer spent nearly a year of his life in army hospitals during the late war in Jacksonville, Fla., Savannah, Ga., and Havana, Cuba, and six months in the two leading hospitals of Chicago. He knew nearly a hundred nurses while there and saw them about their work, and observed nothing which would indicate or reflect discredit upon the profession, or which would disgrace or shock the modesty of a lady, whether she be the sister or wife of the physician or officer in charge, and he can see no good reason why a young man should not want a sister to act in the capacity of a nurse in an army hospital as well as a private one.

The conclusion of the whole matter is, as I see it, that there is certainly a place in the profession of nursing for men, and that in some cases, the ones which I have mentioned and perhaps others yet undiscovered, the services of a man nurse would prove preëminently helpful and advantageous.

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DEAR EDITOR: Dr. Stone's article in the July number of the JOURNAL surely provides for nurses abundant food for thought. With some ideas advanced by him we must be in sympathy, while with others we can but strongly disagree. It is true that for the past few years there has arisen periodically a cry for cheaper service in nursing. This cry has come always from the medical profession, and when one recollects the praise given to intelligent, well-trained nurses, and by the same men who now demand cheaper work, we can but wonder why the change of opinion has arisen. The intelligent, well-trained woman is and has always been, and she will continue to be, the most valuable aid to the profession which now makes loud demands for a cheaper article, and one wonders if excellent work is less desirable now than when first training-schools sent out nurses to the public. Be that as it may, the demand for cheaper service has become so general that schools have been organized to train inferior women in a much shorter time than is required for the educating of superior women, and those women not sufficiently well educated to enter the training-schools must have schools especially organized for them to be instructed in the few things which are deemed necessary to enable them to successfully care for the sick. If the question of expense is the only one to be considered, why would it not be far more satisfactory to employ the hourly nurse, who is as good in every way as she who remains the entire time with the patient, this giving the sick person excellent care for the little time necessary, and have a maid to do the work which properly belongs to a maid? Would it not be better for the patient